



Sen. Joyce Mulliken's UPDATE FROM OLYMPIA 2/13/04

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Committee Assignments

Land Use & Planning (Chair)
Highways & Transportation
Commerce & Trade
Natural Resources, Energy
& Water (Ex officio member)

Studded Snow Tires

SB 5295, which imposes a fee on studded tires and **SB 6320**, which outlaws studded tires, both DIED in the Senate Transportation Committee!

Thanks to the many of you who called the committee to voice your concerns. Our right to use studded snow tires lives for another year!

Join my 13th District House colleagues and me every Tuesday morning at 9:00 am on KBSN, 1470 AM in Moses Lake. I encourage you to tune in and learn more about what's happening in Olympia. You can even call the show and ask questions on the air!

Dear Friends,

Here are a handful of issues that have passed the Senate to this date. While this by no means represents all of the bills, I believe it will give you a taste of what has been happening this past week.

Regulatory Reform

SB 5257 would require the governor's signature on all significant agency rules. This is to establish a measure of accountability. Often times, the Legislature passes laws but the state agencies tasked to implement those laws take extreme liberty with the definition and application of their directives. This bill passed the Senate 34-13.

SB 6491 would allow challenges to be filed Spokane, Yakima, Bellingham and Olympia if the filer lives in these areas. Currently, if a Washington state citizen wants to challenge a state rule they have to do so in Thurston County, even if they live in Colville, Pullman or Moses Lake! This bill passed the Senate 48-1.

Workers Compensation

SB 5378 addresses two recent Supreme Court cases that have increased benefit costs, and provides administrative efficiencies. Under provisions of the bill, wages are calculated by using the highest four consecutive quarters in the last two years. Also, fringe benefits are not included in the calculation of wages, and compensation is paid for lost wages at 65.5 percent of a worker's wage. (71.2 percent of workers would see an increase in time-loss, 26.9 percent would see a decrease, and 2 percent would have their time-loss payments unchanged.) This bill passed the Senate 25-23-1.

SB 6414 requires the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) to produce financial statements and the auditor must perform annual audits, including an actuarial audit. This bill passed the Senate 35-14.

SB 6391 directs Labor and Industries to use the Priorities of Government process. L&I is also directed to come up with a funding plan that does not include the use of accident and medical aid funds (worker and employer premiums) for purposes other than workers' comp. This bill passed the Senate 27-22.

SB 6395 says an injured worker must report an accident or occupational disease to the employer within 14 days. A claim not timely filed will only be allowed for medical benefits (no time-loss). This bill passed the Senate 30-19.

Minimum Wage

SB 5697 suspends the indexing of the minimum wage at any time the state's unemployment rate is higher than the national average. This bill passed the Senate 27-22.

Thanks again to all of you who have contacted my office these past few weeks. It is always good to hear a friendly voice from home!

Sen. Joyce Mulliken, 13th Legislative District